GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINES
LOK SABHA

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:1375
ANSWERED ON:07.12.2015
Conservation of Natural Resources
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Will the Minister of MINES be pleased to state:

(a) whether damage is being caused to the natural resources due to constant mining in various parts of the country including Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand and Madhya Pradesh;
(b) if so, the details thereof along with the steps taken by the Government for the conservation of natural resources in the mining areas;
(c) whether any scheme is being implemented by the Government for the conservation of natural resources; and
(d) if so, the details thereof?

Answer

(a) to (d): The National Mineral Policy (NMP), 2008 recognizes that the extraction of minerals closely impacts other natural resources like land, water, air and forest. NMP, 2008 inter-alia enunciates that:

(i) conservation of minerals shall be construed not in the restrictive sense of abstinence from consumption or preservation for use in the distant future but as a positive concept leading to augmentation of reserve base through improvement in mining methods, beneficiation and utilisation of low grade ore and rejects and recovery of associated minerals.

(ii) all mining shall be undertaken within the parameters of a comprehensive Sustainable Development Framework which, inter-alia, includes guiding principles for a miner to leave the mining area in a better ecological condition after mining and for optimum utilization of the country's natural mineral resources.

Section 18 of Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Act, 1957 empowers Central Government to frame rules for the conservation and systematic development of minerals and for the protection of environment by preventing or controlling any pollution which may be caused by prospecting or mining operations. Accordingly, Mineral Conservation and Development Rules (MCDR), 1988 were framed wherein Rules 31 to 41 are on regulation of environmental aspects of mining. As regulators, Indian Bureau of Mines (IBM) (a subordinate office of the Ministry of Mines) and State Governments approve the mining plan /scheme of mining for systematic and optimum utilisation/extraction of mineral.

The Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change has notified the Environment Impact Assessment (EIA) Notification, 2006 on 14th September, 2006 under the provisions of Environment (Protection) Act, 1986 to regulate the grant of environment clearance for various projects including mining projects. The impact on environment due to mining projects is assessed by an EIA study. Based on the same, Environmental Management Plan is prepared which is considered and the Environment Clearance is granted stipulating conditions to regulate impact on environment due to the project.

The Central Government while according approval under the Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980 stipulates appropriate mitigative measures, such as, creation and maintenance of compensatory afforestation, realization of Net Present Value of the diverted forest land, implementation of wildlife conservation plan (wherever required), phased reclamation of mined out area, demarcation of boundary of mining lease etc. Safeguards are in place to ensure that approvals under the Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980 for diversion of forest land for mining are accorded only after ascertaining that the area of forest land to be diverted is bare minimum and its diversion for nonforest purpose/ mining is unavoidable.